

Central Indiana Air Quality Consultation Group

Regionally Significant Projects Criteria for Air Quality Conformity Purposes

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Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

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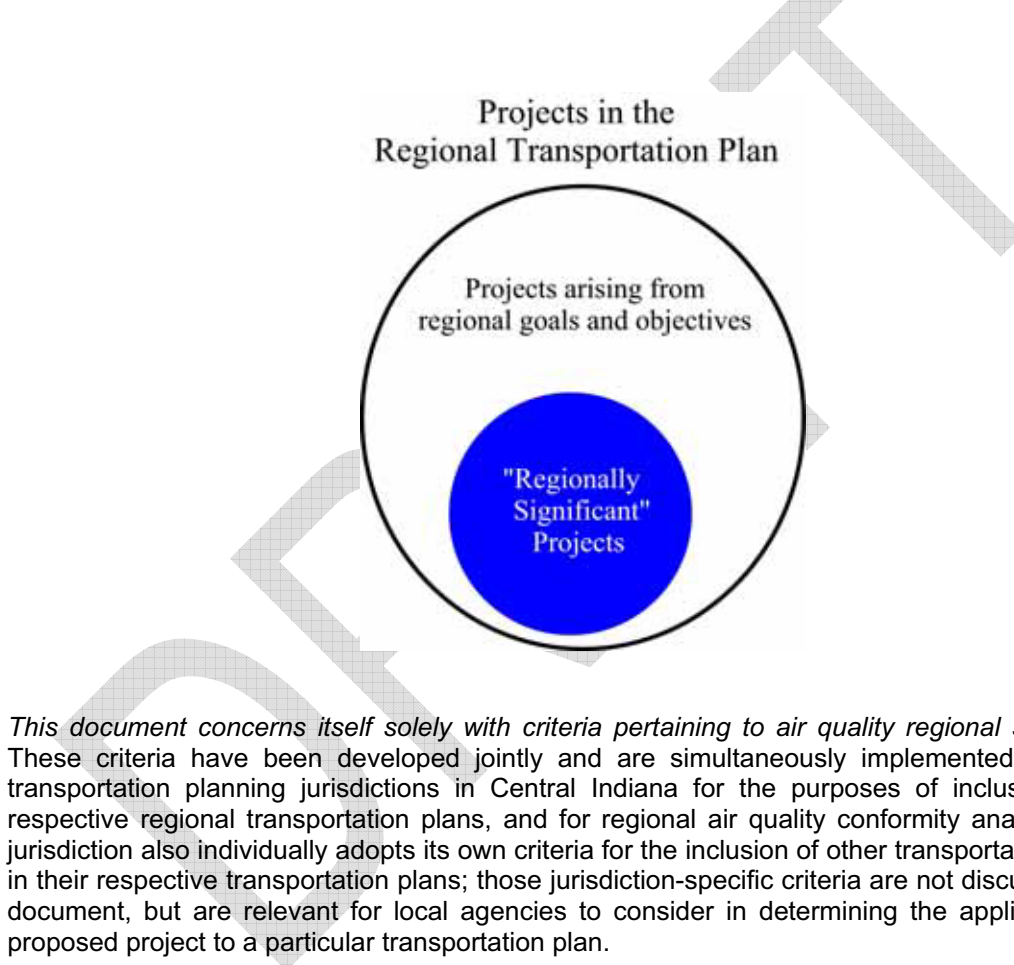
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Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define the criteria for identifying regionally significant transportation projects within the Central Indiana Air Quality Non-attainment Area for air quality conformity purposes. Regionally significant means that a project can potentially have either positive or negative effects upon air quality, and thus air quality modeling and a conformity finding of and for the project is required. This is not to be confused with regional significance for the purposes of inclusion in the Transportation Plan of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

The following graphic demonstrates the project relationships between regional significance arising from air quality conformity and other projects in the transportation plan:



Background

The Central Indiana Air Quality Consultation Group membership consists of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO), the Madison County Council of Governments (MCCOG), and the Columbus Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO).

The Consultation Group was formed to ensure a coordinated and collaborative transportation planning process in the Central Indiana Region that conforms to and is supportive of Federal legislation, guidelines, and goals related to air quality.

Legislative

Required under section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act, as amended in 1990, the transportation conformity rule established the criteria and procedures by which the FHWA, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) determine the conformity of federally funded or approved highway and transit plans, programs, and projects to state implementation plans (SIPs). Conformity ensures that transportation planning does not produce new air quality violations, worsen existing violations, or delay timely attainment of national ambient air quality standards. According to the Clean Air Act, federally supported activities must conform to the implementation plan's purpose of attaining and maintaining these standards. Rule guidelines for conformity were most recently amended in July 2004 (69 FR 40004).

There must be a currently conforming transportation plan and currently conforming TIP at the time of project approval. The conformity criteria is satisfied if the current transportation plan and TIP have been found to conform to the applicable implementation plan by the MPO and DOT according to the procedures of EPA rules. Only one conforming transportation plan or TIP may exist in an area at any time; conformity determinations of a previous transportation plan or TIP expire once the current plan or TIP is found to conform by DOT. The conformity determination on a transportation plan or TIP will also lapse if conformity is not determined according to the EPA specified frequency requirements.

Transportation Plan means the official metropolitan transportation plan that is developed through the metropolitan planning process for the metropolitan planning area, developed pursuant to 23 CFR part 450. The Transportation Plan must be consistent with the mobile vehicle emissions budget(s) in the applicable implementation plan (40 CFR 51.428).

Transportation improvement program (TIP) means a staged, multiyear, intermodal program of transportation projects covering a metropolitan planning area which is consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan, and developed pursuant to 23 CFR part 450. The TIP must be consistent with the mobile vehicle emissions budget(s) in the applicable implementation plan (40 CFR 51.430).

Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

PM 2.5 Standard

A 5-County area in Central Indiana has been classified as a basic non-attainment area under the annual PM 2.5 standard, as designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in April 2005. The five counties included in this designation are as follows:

- Hamilton County
- Hendricks County
- Johnson County
- Marion County
- Morgan County

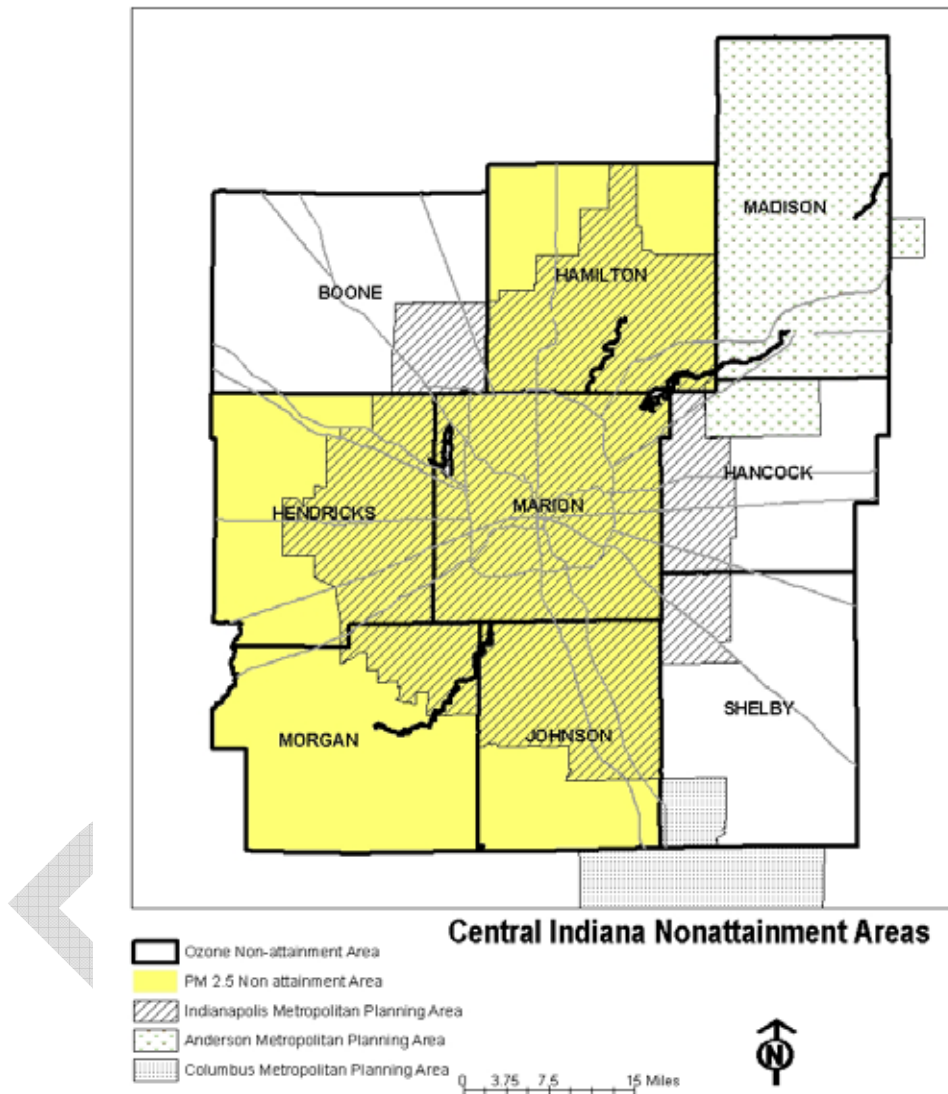
This non-attainment area includes part of the transportation planning jurisdictions of three metropolitan planning organizations, as follows:

- Anderson MPO (Madison County Council of Governments)
- Columbus MPO (Columbus Area Metropolitan Planning Organization)
- Indianapolis MPO (Indianapolis Department of Metropolitan Development)

Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

Figure 1 shows the 5-County PM 2.5 non-attainment area (as well as the ozone nonattainment area) and its relationship to the three metropolitan planning areas (MPAs).

Figure 1



Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

Not all of the Central Indiana PM 2.5 non-attainment area is contained within a metropolitan planning area; four areas are outside of a metropolitan planning area, and are therefore considered under the transportation planning jurisdiction of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), as follows:

- The area to the west of and abutting the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA), located in Hamilton County;
- The area between the Indianapolis and Anderson Metropolitan Planning Areas in Hamilton County; and
- The area to the west/south of and abutting the Indianapolis and Columbus MPA's, in Hendricks, Johnson and Morgan Counties.

Because the 5-County area constitutes a single non-attainment area, a single determination of transportation plan conformity under the annual PM 2.5 standard must be made, encompassing the transportation plans of all four planning jurisdictions. The ultimate objective of conformity analysis is to compare estimated emissions of fine particulate matter and selected precursors (nitrous oxides [NOX]) to budgets jointly established by the EPA and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), and documented in a State Implementation Plan (SIP).

According to the planning agreement developed by the four planning jurisdictions, the responsibilities for transportation modeling for the Columbus and Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Areas and the non-MPA portions of the 9-County area (under INDOT's jurisdiction) fall under the Indianapolis MPO. The Anderson MPO normally performs its own modeling for air quality; however since the Anderson MPA has minimal geographic overlap with the PM 2.5 non-attainment area, the Indianapolis MPO has assumed all modeling responsibilities for PM 2.5 analysis.

Ozone

Eight Hour Standard

On June 15, 2004, the Central Indiana 9-County region was designated as non-attainment for the 8-hour ozone standard. This region includes the planning areas of the Indianapolis and Anderson MPOs, and a small portion of the Columbus MPO. The nine counties of affected by this designation are:

- Morgan County
- Johnson County
- Shelby County
- Hendricks County
- Marion County
- Hancock County
- Boone County
- Hamilton County
- Madison County

Until the SIP for the 8-hour standard is developed (expected in 2007), conformity for the 8-hour ozone standard will be based on an interim test as agreed upon by the consultation group. Based on a "Build < 2002" test (emissions estimates for all analysis years are less than those for the year 2002), MPOs in the 9-County region received a conformity finding for 2030 Plans and current Transportation Improvement Programs in June 2005. See Figure 1 for a map of the Eight-Hour Ozone Nonattainment Area.

Not all of the Central Indiana Eight-Hour Ozone non-attainment area is contained within a metropolitan planning area; three areas are outside of a metropolitan planning area, and are therefore considered under the transportation planning jurisdiction of the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), as follows:

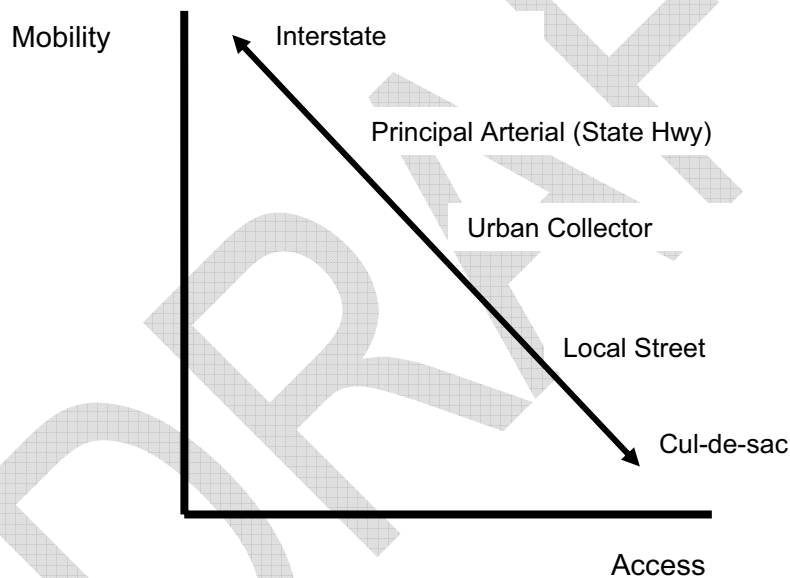
- The area to the west of and abutting the Indianapolis and Columbus Metropolitan Planning Areas (MPA), located in Boone, Hamilton, Hendricks, Johnson, and Morgan Counties;
- The area between the Indianapolis and Anderson Metropolitan Planning Areas in Hamilton County; and
- The area to the south of the Anderson MPA and to the north/east of the Columbus MPA, in Hancock and Shelby Counties.

Regional Significance Criteria

A conformity determination is required for all projects that are considered “regionally significant” with regards to their potential impact on air quality. The following criteria sets define what is and is not a regionally significant project.

Highway Functional Classification System

These criteria are based upon the FHWA Functional Classification System, which classifies facilities (roads) based upon the level of access or mobility they provide. As we change from one classification to the next, we make trade offs between mobility and access. As the amount of access allowed to a road increases, mobility decreases, and vice versa. The following graph depicts this relationship.



Travel demand models follow this same logic. Only facilities (i.e. streets) of a certain classification and above are generally modeled. In the case of the modeling performed by the Indianapolis MPO, only streets classified minor arterial and above are modeled. Thus it is logical that the basis of defining regionally significant projects for air quality conformity purposes also be the functional classification of the facility.

Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

The following table lists the different functional classifications and whether they apply in urban or rural areas.

	Rural	Urban
Interstate	X	X
Freeway / Expressway	X	X
Principal Arterial	X	X
Minor Arterial	X	X
Urban Collector		X
Major Collector	X	
Minor Collector	X	
Local street		X
Local road	X	

Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

Definitive Criteria

The criteria have been divided into three different categories. The first set of criteria defines those projects that are definitively of regional significance for air quality conformity purposes. The second set defines projects that are definitely not of regional significance for air quality conformity purposes. The third set of criteria identifies projects that might be of significance with regards to air quality conformity.

Significant

Projects that fit within the following criteria are definitively of regional significance and thus require a conformity finding:

- A widening of one centerline mile or more in length to a facility classified as minor arterial or above.
- An extension of one centerline mile or more in length of facility classified as minor arterial or above.
- The addition of an at-grade intersection to a facility classified as minor arterial or above.
- Change of an intersection from at-grade to grade separated or vice versa on a facility classified as minor arterial or above.
- Redesignation of one or more lane miles to or from HOV / HOT.
- Modification of an interchange on a facility classified minor arterial or above that results in a change in grade separation.
- Relocation of an interchange on a facility classified minor arterial or above.
- The addition or deletion of transit services that alters annual transit VMT by five percent or more.
- The addition or deletion of intermodal facilities through which 1500 or more passengers board or transfer daily.
- Any change to transit that would result in a five percent or greater mode shift to or from the current transit ridership numbers.
- An upward reclassification of a facility to minor arterial and above.

These criteria are in keeping with the Indianapolis MPO Travel Demand Model network, which consists of those facilities classified minor arterial and above in accordance with the FHWA Highway Functional Classification System.

Insignificant

Projects that are definitively not of regional significance and thus do not require a conformity finding include:

- The addition of acceleration/deceleration lanes (less than one mile in length).
- Intersection improvements such as turn-lane additions and auxiliary lane additions.
- Widening of an existing interchange ramp.
- Addition of turning lanes to an interchange.

Regionally Significant Projects Criteria

Non-Definitive Criteria

Projects that require a significance finding by the Consultation Group include:

- Land use changes that have the potential to alter the function of a road facility from its current function to the equivalent function of a minor arterial and above, regardless of the current functional classification of the facility involved.
- Projects not anticipated by this document that are identified by the Consultation Group as being potentially significant with regards to their impact on air quality.

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Information Responsibilities

The Consultation Group is responsible for ensuring that the transportation planning process conforms to federal regulations and guidelines. A negative conformity finding would result in an immediate halt to all federally funded transportation projects within the non-attainment area.

Part 450 of Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations defines the federal requirements for States and MPOs with respect to maintaining a Transportation Plan and a Transportation Improvement Program. In particular 450.324 states that all transportation projects of regional significance regardless of funding source (federal, local or private) must be listed in the TIP in non-attainment and maintenance areas.

The area being modeled by the Indianapolis MPO is very large and contains multiple political and private entities that undertake transportation projects that fall within the criteria of being regionally significant. The conformity determination process involves multiple steps and entities and thus requires significant time from start to finish.

While the Conformity Group endeavors to distribute information regarding the conformity process as widely as possible, the final responsibility to bring information to the Indianapolis MPO regarding regionally significant or potentially significant projects lies with those entities seeking to accomplish their projects.

These and other responsibilities are defined in detail in the Central Indiana Air Quality Consultation Group Planning Agreement as well as Memorandums of Understanding between the Consultation Group members.

References

“Highway Functional Classification – Concepts, Criteria and Procedure” U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, March 1989 Revision

Title 23 – Highways, Code of Federal Regulation Part 450, Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, April 2004 Revision

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